

Head Start Healthy Marriage Newsletter

August 2008



Head Start Awards 24 Healthy Marriage Grants

In late 2007, Head Start approved the funding of 24 Healthy Marriage programs to serve the families of Head Start enrolled and eligible children. It is our pleasure to introduce these new awards, and in so doing, share program highlights, promising practices, ideas and experiences that will enable all of our Head Start sites to provide successful marriage and relationship education programs in their respective communities.

"Because of the Healthy Marriage Initiative, Head Start enrolled and eligible children and families will have a more hopeful future." Frank Fuentes, Head Start Deputy Director

2007 - 2008 OHS Healthy Marriage Grantees

Avance, Inc.(Houston Chapter) - Houston, TX	Catholic Healthcare W. DBA California Medical Ctr - Los Angeles, CA
Central Missouri Community Action - Columbia, MO	Central Vermont Community Action Council - Barre, VT
Charter County of Wayne, Michigan - Detroit, MI	Children's Home Society of Washington - Seattle, WA
Community Action Corp. of South Texas - Alice, TX	Community Relations - Social Dev. Commission - Milwaukee, WI
Douglass Community Services, Inc.- Hannibal MO	Economic Opportunity Committee of St. Clair Cty. - Port Huron, MI
Family Enrichment Network, Inc. - Johnson City, NY	Hillsborough County Board of County Cmrs. - Tampa, FL
Holyoke Chicopee Spgfld Head Start - Springfield, MA	Kings Community Action Organization - Hanford, CA
Lake Cumberland Community Action Agency, Inc.	Little Dixie Community Action Agency - Hugo, OK
Maricopa County - Phoenix, AZ	Municipality of Mayaguez - Mayaguez, PR
N.Kentucky Community Action Cmmsn - Covington, KY	Ogden-Weber Community Action Partnership - Ogden, UT
People Inc. of Southwest Virginia - Abingdon, VA	Pinellas Cty Head Start Child Dev. & Family Svcs - Pinellas Park, FL
Rural Opportunities - Harrisburg, PA	Utah State University -Logan, Utah

In This Issue

24 Grants Awarded
NHSA Collaboration
Milwaukee's SDC Head Start
Utah State University Serves
Stepfamilies

Milwaukee Head Start Launches Healthy Marriage Program

The Social Development Commission (SDC) recently launched its Milwaukee Head Start Healthy Marriage program. The initiative is led by the SDC and its five delegate agencies and is designed to help individuals and couples develop skills needed to form healthy marriages and families that address issues such as conflict resolution, team-building, communication, budgeting, parenting, and domestic violence.

NHSA Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood Collaboration

ACF Announces Collaboration with NHSA The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) announced on June 18, 2008 a collaboration with the National Head Start Association (NHSA) to promote healthy marriage and responsible fatherhood.

Recognizing the Need: As their service increased to reach more than 3,300 families, SDC examined the increasingly challenging issues faced by its children and families. Identifying the health of family life and its affect on children as a critical need, SDC turned its focus to expanding its parent programs to include strengthening of relationships within families.

Identifying Leadership: As the project searched for the right person to lead the initiative, they found Deborah Taylor within their midst. A 17- year Head Start employee who previously served as Parent Involvement Coordinator, Deborah had first-hand knowledge of the struggles resulting from difficult relationships that surrounded Head Start children.

The collaboration will focus on improving lives of children by providing access to marriage education. On a voluntary basis parents can acquire knowledge, skill and guidance necessary to form and sustain a healthy marriage.

Milwaukee's Keys To Marriage Education Success

- 1. Staff that is known by the community and holds its trust*
- 2. Facilitators know and are known in the community served.*
- 3. Gave "voice" to the participants through activities and time to process together .*
- 4. Program staff and policy council were engaged early in the program launch.*
- 5. Have Fun!*

Utah's Keys to Marriage Education

- 1. Knowing the community - taking time to study the*

Deborah states, "I felt my life and work experience was deeply connected. My passion is to see people whole in their relationship and at the end of the day children would have a healthy environment." Deborah further states, "I knew that if people could learn how to solve problems and find different ways to have good families their lives would be different. We needed a program that focuses on teaching them these skills and this program offered what we were looking for."

Making the Plan A Reality: The first major event for Head Start Milwaukee was a Healthy Marriage program retreat.

Recruitment efforts for the retreat included delegate participation, community marketing, and networking through community and faith-based organizations. The first event included the entire policy counsel and several community members, both couples and singles that were lively, tailored to the audience and met with spirited enthusiasm. Men and women were separated for some of the more sensitive topics and then brought back together for discussion and sharing.

The response of participants who experienced the retreat exceeded expectations as couples better understood one another, their commitment, and their relationship's impact on their children.

Retreat facilitators said although the activities were light and spirited, they fueled fruitful discussions including the topic of blended families as well as opened communication doors on topics such as mutual respect and identifying miscommunication traps.

All participants were grateful and had positive comments on the evaluation. Even after the event ended, leaders were receiving follow-up phone calls for additional marriage skills and training.

Stepfamilies - The Emerging Underserved



"By addressing the barriers that have historically hindered these couples from participating in marriage education, this project provides low-income, Hispanic couples in stepfamilies with unique opportunities to learn healthy marriage skills", says Brain Higginbotham, the Healthy Marriage program director of Logan, UT.

Divorces and remarriages each have their own challenges, but there is a growing need for marriage education and relationship building skills for those who are remarried and have stepfamilies. In Logan, Utah there is a project that is meeting this need.

Through the Healthy Marriage Initiative, three Head Start agencies at six different sites throughout central and southern

needs of the community and address unmet needs

2. Capitalizing on organizations' established history and rapport with the target population

3. Staff awareness of the needs in blended / step-families

4. Positioning class facilitators to be the same staff who have built a trust-relationship with participants.

For more information

Please email Healthy Marriage Program Analyst Mia Hendricks, at Mia.Hendricks@ACF.hhs.gov

Utah uses a 12- hour research based program for adults, teens and children. The curriculum focuses on commitment, communication, step-parenting, family budgets, conflict management, and other issues that help family stabilization. Classes are offered in English and Spanish.

Recognizing the Need: In his 17 years of work with Head Start families, Brian knew that the need to provide relationship skills to blended families was significant. The significance became real after an interview on Spanish radio regarding the program, his Head Start office received over 70 calls asking for more information on the workshops. According to Brian, "Marriage is complex enough but the second marriage adds a number of complexities such as the blended family. This program can help meet those challenges so kids grow up in a stable and healthy environment."

Making the Plan A Reality: The Logan Head Start Healthy Marriage program just launched in February of 2008 but as Brian states, "while ours is fairly young, we are seeing evidence that these expectations are initial objectives and goals are being met and exceeded." 5-year project goals are expected to include a minimum 200 facilitators trained; 80 Smart Steps workshops conducted; and 560 couples, 1120 individuals and 1400 children/adolescents served.